

# Diptera, Tipulidae. Some Collecting and Setting Hints

P. N. CROW

At the Annual Exhibition of the South London Entomological and Natural History Society held on the 28th October last at the British Museum, I exhibited, amongst other insects, a drawer of Tipulidae which Mr. L. Parmenter kindly tells me were admired by many of the people there as they are very difficult insects to set as well as collect intact.

Now with regard to the collecting great care must be taken always when netting or tubing the creatures as the legs are so delicate. I think previous experience with collecting Lepidoptera helped me a lot to get good species as one seems to sense a good spot. Beech trunks and the surrounding foliage are splendid places in dull weather for good collecting, especially where there are some natural rotten ones. Big trunks seem to be very good and one gets very 'Tipulidae' tree conscious, just like in the old Lepidoptera days when I used to search each year for females of the Lobster Moth *Stauropus fagi* L. These I could always find a few specimens of, and occasionally a pair in 'cop,' but only on the small trees of about arm's thickness. To get back to Diptera, certain trees always seem to produce good species and, no doubt, the 'Tips' have bred there.

With regard to the killing of the Tipulidae, I use both Ethyl Acetate and Cyanide, and to this latter I am still much attached from Lepidopterous days as it has never let me down. The only trouble these days is to find a chemist who will make up a bottle to one's exact instructions! Ethyl Acetate is quite good as a Killing Agent, but the only drawback is that the bottle has to be charged with more of the liquid every time it is used daily. The great thing one must not do is to leave the insects in the bottle after they are dead as they can go greasy. Usually an hour or two is plenty of time for them to be 'bottled' and then although they may seem to be fairly relaxed it is best to transfer them to the *laurel* relaxing tin for a day or two. This process really softens the legs, which is essential for good setting. When I am satisfied the legs are supple I pin the insect, taking the greatest care as it is very easy to dislodge a leg. Then I spread the wings before I finally set the legs. Before I take an insect off the board I always run the setting needle under the legs to make sure one has not stuck to the board. The essential point of setting the creatures is to ensure that the *laurel* relaxing tin is in perfect working order. I make myself up two tins a year, each of which lasts me just over four months. For setting after killing with cyanide I leave the creatures in the cyanide just 30 hours before transferring them to the relaxing tin. But really the great thing about setting is the care taken. It always helps with the 'Tips' to coax the insects to die in a position from which it is possible to transfer them to the relaxing tin without any chance of damaging a leg.

I hope these little notes of mine will be of help to anyone interested.  
c/o Reading Museum, Reading, Berks. 8.i.68.

---

OVER PAGE

Alan E. Stubbs: continued from Page 25.